

**STATE OF NEVADA**  
**STATE ENGINEER'S OFFICE**  
**Carson City, Nevada**

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**Practice and Procedure in  
Protest Hearings Before  
State Engineer**

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**Division of Water Resources**

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**CARSON CITY, NEVADA**

## ADJUDICATION OF VESTED WATER RIGHTS; APPROPRIATION OF PUBLIC WATERS

GENERAL PROVISIONS		PAGE
533.010	Scope; construction; deviation from requirements.....	5
533.020	Definitions.....	5
533.030	"Applicant" defined.....	5
533.040	"Interested person" defined.....	5
533.050	"Party" defined.....	5
533.060	"Person presenting public comment" defined.....	5
533.070	"Protest hearing" defined.....	6
533.080	"Protestant" defined.....	6
533.090	"State engineer" defined.....	6

<b>BEFORE STATE ENGINEER</b>		<b>PAGE</b>
533.100	Recognition as interested person.....	6
533.110	Appearance of person presenting public comment.....	6
533.120	Designation of person to preside over hearing.....	7
533.130	Pleadings: Forms for filing protest.....	7
533.140	Pleadings: Answers.....	7
533.150	Withdrawal of protest: Procedure; consequences; stipulation regarding protest.....	7
533.160	Prehearing discovery: Parties' right to conduct; state engineer's right to order; admissibility at hearing.....	8
533.170	Prehearing conferences: State engineer's right to order; scope.....	8
533.180	Hearings: Nature and objective.....	9
533.190	Hearings: Location of; conduct of parties at.....	9
533.200	Hearings: Right to representation by attorney; role of attorney.....	9
533.210	Hearings: Permissible issues.....	9
533.220	Hearings: Reporting by court reporter; availability and costs of transcripts.....	10
533.230	Hearings: Identification of witnesses.....	10
533.240	Hearings: Oral testimony; oaths and affirmations.....	10
533.250	Hearings: Written testimony.....	11
533.260	Hearings: Admissibility and consideration of evidence.....	11
533.270	Hearings: Subpoenas.....	11
533.280	Hearings: Identification and exchange of exhibits.....	12
533.290	Hearings: Admissibility and form of exhibits.....	12
533.300	Hearings: Administrative notice.....	12
533.310	Hearings: Stipulations.....	13
533.320	Hearings: Continuances.....	13
533.330	Hearings: Failure to appear.....	13
533.340	Hearings: Consolidation.....	13
533.350	Hearings: Order of proceedings.....	13
533.360	Hearings: Additional evidence.....	15
533.370	Hearings: Interim order.....	15
533.380	Petition to adopt, amend or repeal regulation on practice and procedure of protest hearing.....	15

## GENERAL PROVISIONS

### **533.010 Scope; construction; deviation from requirements.**

#### **1. The provisions of this chapter:**

(a) Govern the practice and procedure of hearings before the state engineer on protests against applications to appropriate water or to change the place of diversion, manner of use or place of use of an existing water right under NRS 533.365.

(b) Must be liberally construed to secure the just, speedy and economical determination of all issues presented to the state engineer.

2. In special cases, where strict compliance is found to be impracticable or unnecessary, and affected persons are given proper notice of any procedural changes, the state engineer may permit deviation from the provisions of this chapter.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.020 Definitions.** As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires, the words and terms defined in NAC 533.030 to 533.090, inclusive, have the meaning ascribed to them in those sections.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.030 "Applicant" defined.** "Applicant" means a person seeking to appropriate water or to change the place of diversion, manner of use or place of use of an existing water right by filing an appropriate application with the state engineer.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.040 "Interested person" defined.** "Interested person" means a person who fails to file a protest in a timely manner but who is recognized by the state engineer, pursuant to NAC 533.100, as a person entitled to testify at the hearing.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.050 "Party" defined.** "Party" means an applicant or protestant.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.060 "Person presenting public comment" defined.** "Person presenting public comment" means a person attending the hearing and expressing:

1. General support or opposition regarding a particular project proposal, the facts already in evidence or the related public policy; or

2. An opinion regarding the adequacy of environmental documents relating to a particular project proposal.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.070 "Protest hearing" defined.** "Protest hearing" means a hearing before the state engineer on a protest against an application to appropriate water or to change the place of diversion, manner of use or place of use of an existing water right.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.080 "Protestant" defined.** "Protestant" means a person filing a protest in a timely manner with the state engineer against an application to appropriate water or to change the place of diversion, manner of use or place of use of an existing water right.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.090 "State engineer" defined.** "State engineer" has the meaning ascribed to it in NRS 533.015 and, for the purposes of this chapter, includes a person designated by the state engineer to preside over a protest hearing.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

## **PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE IN PROTEST HEARINGS BEFORE STATE ENGINEER**

### **533.100 Recognition as interested person.**

1. A person who wishes to be recognized by the state engineer as an interested person must file a written request for recognition with the office of the state engineer and pay a fee in the amount prescribed by NRS 533.435 for filing a protest, at least 30 days before the hearing or prehearing conference at which he wishes to be recognized.

2. The state engineer will grant the request for recognition only upon a showing that extreme circumstances prevented the person from filing his own protest in a timely manner.

3. An interested person may only testify on matters of law, broad public issues or matters concerning how any action of the state engineer with regard to a particular application may affect the operation of a specific water transportation and supply project.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

### **533.110 Appearance of person presenting public comment.**

1. A person presenting public comment must give notice that he intends to appear and present comment at a protest hearing by signing in at the hearing location before the hearing.

2. A person presenting public comment:

(a) Will not be sworn in or otherwise asked to affirm the truth of his testimony; and

(b) Shall not attempt to present facts into evidence during his testimony.

3. The state engineer may:

- (a) Limit the time allowed for public comment; and
- (b) Allow questions to be addressed to a person presenting public comment.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.120 Designation of person to preside over hearing.** If the state engineer designates a person to preside over a protest hearing, the person so designated may make the ultimate ruling in the hearing, unless otherwise limited by the state engineer.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.130 Pleadings: Forms for filing protest.**

1. The forms for filing a protest are available upon request and furnished without charge by the state engineer.

2. A protestant need not use the filing form furnished by the state engineer but the filing must be in substantially the same form and contain the same information as that requested in the form furnished by the state engineer.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.140 Pleadings: Answers.**

1. An applicant may, within 45 days after service of a notice of protest, file an answer to a protest filed against his application. The answer must be accompanied by the filing fee prescribed by NRS 533.435.

2. An applicant filing such an answer shall, within 2 days after he files the answer, serve a copy of the answer upon the protestant who filed the protest to which the answer responds.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.150 Withdrawal of protest: Procedure; consequences; stipulation regarding protest.**

1. A protestant may withdraw his protest by filing with the state engineer a written request for withdrawal of the protest at any time before the time scheduled for the protest hearing.

2. If a protestant withdraws his protest by filing his written request for withdrawal less than 72 hours before the time scheduled for the protest hearing:

(a) The protestant shall pay to the state engineer an amount equal to the costs associated with preparing to hold the hearing, as determined by the state engineer; and

(b) Unless more than one protest was filed against the application, the state engineer will proceed to act upon the application in the same manner as if no protest had been filed.

3. The applicant and protestant may enter into a stipulation regarding

the application or related protest. When signed and filed with the office of the state engineer, such a stipulation may be treated as a withdrawal of the protest. The filing of such stipulation does not:

- (a) Make the state engineer a party to the agreement;
- (b) Establish a water right not previously acquired pursuant to law; or
- (c) Bind the state engineer or any other protestant not a party to the stipulation.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.160 Prehearing discovery: Parties' right to conduct; state engineer's right to order; admissibility at hearing.**

1. Prehearing discovery is not a matter of right, but may be conducted in compliance with a stipulation between the parties or upon order of the state engineer.

2. If the state engineer orders that a deposition be taken, he will notify the concerned parties at least 15 days before the date set for the deposition. The notice will set forth the name of the party to be deposed and the time, place and general subject matter on which the party will be deposed.

3. No party may use testimony contained in a deposition in the place of a witness's testimony during the hearing, except upon order of the state engineer and upon a showing of extreme circumstances preventing the witness from appearing at the hearing.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.170 Prehearing conferences: State engineer's right to order; scope.**

1. The state engineer may, upon 15 days' notice to the parties, hold a prehearing conference to:

- (a) Formulate or simplify the issues involved in the proceeding;
- (b) Record admissions of fact or stipulations of the parties;
- (c) Determine or obtain documents necessary for the hearing;
- (d) Identify the witnesses and the subject matter of their expected testimony and, if necessary, limit the number of witnesses;
- (e) Arrange for the exchange of:
  - (1) Proposed exhibits;
  - (2) Prepared testimony of experts;
  - (3) Lists of witnesses;
  - (4) Lists of exhibits; or
  - (5) Other materials the state engineer deems to be necessary;
- (f) Limit the time and scope of the examination of witnesses;
- (g) Establish an agenda for the hearing which is most suitable to the particular case, including the order in which parties will present their respective cases; and
- (h) Discuss and resolve other matters which may promote orderly conduct, expedite the hearings or achieve a settlement.

2. Unless otherwise ordered for good cause shown, the failure of a party to attend a prehearing conference constitutes a waiver of any objection to the rulings made at the prehearing conference.

3. The rulings made by the state engineer and the agreements made between the parties at a prehearing conference:

- (a) Will be made a part of the record;
- (b) Control the course of subsequent proceedings unless modified at the hearing by the state engineer; and
- (c) Are binding upon all parties.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.180 Hearings: Nature and objective.** A protest hearing will be conducted as a quasi-judicial proceeding with the objective of developing an adequate record upon which the state engineer may rely to make a sound decision, without causing unnecessary delay and expense to participating parties or to the office of the state engineer.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.190 Hearings: Location of; conduct of parties at.**

1. Protest hearings will be held at the time and place designated by the notice of hearing. The state engineer will attempt to find a location which will accommodate the parties and optimize the resources of the office of the state engineer.

2. Each party to a protest hearing, his counsel or other agent and any spectators shall conduct themselves in a respectful manner during the hearing. If a person conducts himself in a disrespectful manner, the state engineer may expel him from the hearing.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.200 Hearings: Right to representation by attorney; role of attorney.**

1. A party in a protest hearing may be represented by an attorney or other agent.

2. An attorney representing a party in a protest hearing must be an active member of the State Bar of Nevada or associated with an active member of the State Bar of Nevada.

3. An attorney or other agent representing a party will be recognized as fully controlling the case on behalf of the party.

4. Following the entry of an appearance by an attorney or other agent for a party, all notices, documents and orders thereafter served must be served upon the attorney or agent. Service on the attorney or agent constitutes, for all purposes, valid service upon the party represented.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.210 Hearings: Permissible issues.**

1. Issues to be considered during a hearing will be determined from

the contents of the application and any protests, and may include any issues that may arise under chapters 533 and 534 of NRS.

2. The state engineer may define or limit the issues to be considered. If new issues arise for the first time during the hearing, the state engineer may allow these issues to be pursued, if appropriate and relevant.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.220 Hearings: Reporting by court reporter; availability and cost of transcripts.**

1. The state engineer will ensure that proceedings at hearings are reported by a certified court reporter.

2. The original and one copy of the transcript of the proceedings must be filed with the state engineer.

3. The applicant and the protestant shall bear equally the fees of the court reporter for:

(a) The appearance of the court reporter;

(b) The travel expenses of the court reporter; and

(c) Reporting and transcribing the portion of the transcript consisting of comments by the state engineer and the public.

4. The applicant and the protestant shall bear pro rata, based on the percentage of the transcript taken up by their own case, the fees of the court reporter for reporting and transcribing the portion of the transcript taken up by the applicant's and the protestant's case.

5. Any person may obtain a copy of a transcript prepared under this section by requesting such a copy from the office of the state engineer or the court reporter and upon payment of the actual cost of obtaining the copy from the court reporter.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.230 Hearings: Identification of witnesses.**

1. Before the hearing, the state engineer may require the parties to identify the persons intending to offer direct oral testimony at the hearing. The state engineer will notify the parties of this requirement in any manner determined by the state engineer to give the parties notice of this requirement.

2. The state engineer will not require the advance identification of persons who intend to offer rebuttal testimony.

3. If a party fails to comply with a prehearing order to identify a witness and this failure results in prejudice to the opposing party, the state engineer may:

(a) Refuse to allow that witness to testify; or

(b) Disregard any portion of the testimony.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.240 Hearings: Oral testimony; oaths and affirmations.**

1. All oral testimony of witnesses appearing on behalf of a party



must be given under oath or affirmation. For the purposes of this section, public commentary is not considered to be testimony.

2. A witness may give his oral testimony as his own narrative or his attorney or agent may direct his oral testimony.

3. A witness who gives his oral testimony under oath or affirmation must submit to cross-examination.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

#### **533.250 Hearings: Written testimony.**

1. When the particular facts of an application and protest indicate that many witnesses will appear at the hearing or that a considerable amount of technical testimony will be necessary, the state engineer may require parties and witnesses to submit their testimony in written form before the hearing date.

2. If written testimony is submitted, the witness shall also appear at the hearing to:

(a) Affirm that his written testimony is true and correct and that he personally prepared it or directed its preparation; and

(b) Submit to cross-examination.

3. Written testimony will not be read into the record, but must be entered into evidence as an exhibit. The state engineer may, however, require a witness who has submitted written testimony to summarize it at the hearing.

4. If written testimony is required, the state engineer will inform the parties of this requirement in any manner determined by the state engineer to give the parties notice of this requirement. The notice will also inform the parties of the related obligation to appear at the hearing.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

#### **533.260 Hearings: Admissibility and consideration of evidence.**

1. The state engineer will consider only:

(a) Oral or written testimony submitted under oath or affirmation;

(b) Facts of which administrative notice has been taken pursuant to NAC 533.300; and

(c) Facts or other information entered into the record by stipulation.

2. The state engineer, may exclude testimony that is irrelevant, incompetent or unduly repetitious by:

(a) Requesting a party to cease his line of examination or narrative; or

(b) Refusing to consider the testimony when making his final determination.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

#### **533.270 Hearings: Subpoenas.**

1. The state engineer may, on his own motion, issue a subpoena requiring the attendance of a witness at a protest hearing.

2. A party may request that the state engineer issue a subpoena

requiring the attendance of any other witness necessary to present pertinent testimony. The request must be in writing and served on the state engineer no later than 10 working days before the hearing. The request must set forth the reason for the subpoena.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.280 Hearings: Identification and exchange of exhibits.**

1. The state engineer may require in advance of the hearing:

(a) Identification of each exhibit that a party intends to use to support or illustrate a particular position; and

(b) Exchange of exhibits between certain designated parties.

If applicable, the state engineer will notify the parties of this requirement in any manner determined by the state engineer to give the parties notice of this requirement.

2. If a party fails to comply with a prehearing order to identify or exchange exhibits and the lack of notice would result in prejudice to the opposing party, the state engineer may refuse to accept the exhibit into evidence.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.290 Hearings: Admissibility and form of exhibits.**

1. Exhibits that will be introduced as evidence must be:

(a) In a form that is readily reproducible; and

(b) On paper that is 8½ by 11 inches or that may be folded to that size.

2. Larger charts, maps, drawings or other materials will not be introduced into evidence but may be used for demonstrative purposes.

3. Parties must give each other an opportunity to review each other's exhibits before the state engineer will accept them into evidence.

4. An original and one copy of each exhibit that is offered into evidence must be submitted to the state engineer or presiding officer.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.300 Hearings: Administrative notice.** The state engineer may take administrative notice of or accept into evidence by reference to their contents:

1. Files and records of the office of the state engineer;

2. Public records that have been prepared by other governmental agencies;

3. Facts of which judicial notice may be taken by the courts of this state; and

4. Technical or scientific matter that:

(a) Has been generally accepted by the relevant scientific community; and

(b) Is within the field of expertise of the office of the state engineer.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.310 Hearings: Stipulations.**

1. With the approval of the state engineer, the parties may stipulate to any fact in issue, either by a written stipulation introduced into evidence as an exhibit or by an oral statement entered in the record.

2. Such a stipulation is binding only upon the parties to the stipulation and is not binding on the state engineer.

3. The state engineer may require proof by independent evidence of the stipulated facts.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.320 Hearings: Continuances.**

1. A party may request that the state engineer continue a protest hearing to a later date by submitting a request for continuance to the state engineer at least 5 working days before the date set for the hearing.

2. The state engineer will notify the other parties of any request for continuance and accept any responses to the request by the other parties.

3. After considering the request and any responses, the state engineer may grant or deny the request.

4. The state engineer may reset a hearing which has previously been continued only if he gives at least 15 days' notice to all parties.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.330 Hearings: Failure to appear.** If a party fails to appear at a scheduled protest hearing and no continuance has been granted, the state engineer will hear the evidence of the witnesses who have appeared and will proceed to consider the matter and dispose of it on the basis of the evidence presented.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.340 Hearings: Consolidation.**

1. The state engineer may consolidate two or more proceedings if it appears that the issues are substantially the same and the interest of the parties will not be prejudiced by the consolidation.

2. The state engineer will determine the order in which the parties introduce their evidence and the general procedure to be followed during the course of a consolidated hearing.

3. The state engineer will apportion the costs of a consolidated hearing among the parties responsible for the costs.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.350 Hearings: Order of proceedings.** The state engineer has full discretion in each case to determine the order in which the parties introduce their evidence and the general procedure to be followed during the course of each protest hearing. The presentation will ordinarily be in the following order:

1. The state engineer will call the proceeding to order and announce the matter to be heard.

2. If a prehearing investigation was conducted it will be so noted.

3. The state engineer will explain the order and agenda of the hearing.

4. The state engineer will inquire as to whether the parties are represented by counsel or other agent.

5. The state engineer will offer the exhibits of the state engineer into evidence. Any party may then object to that evidence.

6. The protestant followed by the applicant, or their attorneys or agents, may respectively make opening statements which briefly summarize what their proposed testimony and exhibits are intended to establish. Opening statements must not contain evidence. Cross-examination regarding the contents of an opening statement will not be allowed.

7. The protestant followed by the applicant, or their attorneys or agents, shall respectively present their cases in chief which include:

(a) Testimony, either by his own narrative or by direct examination conducted by his attorney or agent;

(b) Cross-examination;

(c) Redirect examination; and

(d) Recross-examination,

in that order. The same order of examination will be followed for each witness of the protestant and then for each witness of the applicant. Questions to clarify a point or correct a mistake may be allowed at any time.

8. The state engineer may question the protestant, the applicant and any of their witnesses.

9. After all testimony and comments have been received on behalf of the applicant and protestant, the state engineer will admit into evidence, subject to objection, the exhibits that have not already been admitted during the hearing. The state engineer may rule on the admissibility of a questioned exhibit after hearing arguments or he may take the objections under submission and announce the ruling on admissibility as part of the final decision.

10. The state engineer may permit a closing statement from the protestant, followed by one from the applicant, that briefly summarizes the points respectively made in the case in chief. Cross-examination regarding the contents of a closing statement will not be allowed.

11. Interested persons and persons presenting public comment may present their respective comments. The state engineer may examine any interested person or person presenting public comment.

12. The state engineer may indicate whether legal briefs must be filed. If he orders the filing of briefs, he will state which subject must be addressed in the briefs and the schedule for their submission. Briefs ordered under this subsection must be filed with the office of the state

engineer and must be accomplished by an acknowledgment or an affidavit showing service on the other party.

13. Unless the state engineer orders otherwise, the state engineer will close the record of the hearing, may take the matter under submission and will rule as provided in subsection 4 of NRS 533.370.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.360 Hearings: Additional evidence.** At any time during the protest hearing, the state engineer may order the presentation of further evidence on any issue. The state engineer may authorize any party to file within a fixed time after the hearing additional specific documentary evidence to become part of the record.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.370 Hearings: Interim order.** At any time during the protest hearing process, the state engineer may issue an appropriate interim order.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)

**533.380 Petition to adopt, amend or repeal regulation on practice and procedure of protest hearing.**

1. If a person desires to petition the state engineer, pursuant to NRS 233B.100, to adopt, amend or repeal a regulation regarding the practice and procedure of protest hearings, he must submit such a petition in writing and include a statement of the petitioner's interest, the nature of the request, the reasons for the request, relevant data, argument for the request and such other matters as the petitioner believes may be helpful to the state engineer in determining the proper action to take in the matter. The petition must be signed by or on behalf of the petitioner and filed in the office of the state engineer.

2. If a petition requests the adoption of a proposed regulation, it must also include the full text of the proposed regulation.

3. If a petition requests the amendment or repeal of an existing regulation, it must also include a copy of the regulation or that portion of the regulation in question and the suggested amendment.

(Added to NAC by St. Engineer, eff. 2-8-95)